

HEART OF AMERICA

August 2005
Volume 1, Number 8

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS REVIEW

A MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER SERVING THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS UNITS OF IOWA, KANSAS, MISSOURI AND NEBRASKA

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Mid-America Medical Reserve Corps Participates in Volunteer Reception Center Exercise



Karen Whitlow, Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator, briefs unit volunteers prior to the start of the exercise

Two dozen members of the Mid-America Medical Reserve Corps (MAMRC) participated in an August 5th simulation exercise of the Greater Kansas City Volunteer Reception Center Plan. Several local emergency response organizations had worked together as the *Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteer Task Force* for more

than a year to develop the plan for processing emergency response volunteers. The plan is designed to be activated for only the largest natural or man-made disasters. It establishes a process to effectively handle at least 5,000 volunteers (mostly unaffiliated with any agency) over a time frame varying from 14 to 60 days. The worst case scenario would involve processing 1,000 volunteers per day for several days, with ultimate totals over 10,000 volunteers processed into voluntary agencies throughout the greater Kansas City area.



Medical Reserve Corps members process a spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteer (SUV) into the unit

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The MAMRC contingent joined representatives from a variety of emergency services groups in testing the plan. This plan for handling large numbers of spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers is among a very few of these types of efforts in the nation, and the exercise drew observers from local, state and federal agencies.



Medical Reserve Corps members process several of their colleagues who acted as spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers

The simulation identified several challenges in executing the plan. Of greatest importance to the MAMRC was a somewhat limited understanding of the unit. Some Volunteer Reception Center staff seemed uncertain of the MAMRC's composition or function and, as a result, referred potential volunteers to other, less appropriate agencies. MAMRC volunteers processed by the Volunteer Reception Center staff played a key role in identifying this issue. Efforts by the MAMRC to better educate task force members are already underway.

MAMRC volunteers also helped test procedures for processing volunteers, both Division 3 (untrained but pre-screened) and spontaneous, into unit operations. The need for an additional form specifying the position, date, time and location of assignments for accepted volunteers soon became obvious. Just-In-Time (JIT) training will also be developed to enhance MAMRC operations at the Volunteer Reception Center.

Those participating in the exercise learned a great deal about the way the spontaneous volunteer reception plan would work, as well as the part the MAMRC would play. "It was interesting to see how wrinkles in the system came to light, were ironed out, and efficiency improved as the day progressed," said MAMRC volunteer Mindy Carter. What I didn't expect was the air of camaraderie that existed among all of the participating volunteers,

and which was especially evident among those of us in the Medical Reserve Corps. Overall, I'd say it was a very productive exercise."



Spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers are greeted as they arrive at the Medical Reserve Corps processing station

Preliminary List of Federal Preparedness Grant Programs Available Online from NIMS Integration Center

According to its August 4, 2005 *NIMS Alert*, the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Integration Center is making available a preliminary list of federal preparedness grant programs on its Web page at www.fema.gov/nims. The information was provided by federal departments and agencies to the center and includes federal preparedness funding programs with state and local jurisdictions such as cooperative agreements and memorandums of understandings as well as grants and contracts.

The NIMS Integration Center is making this preliminary list available to help state and local entities identify funding streams that may be affected in connection with NIMS implementation requirements. According to the NIMS Integration Center, this should not be considered a definitive list of federal preparedness grants and cooperative agreements. Disaster assistance funds are not tied to NIMS compliance.

For more information, see the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* at www.cfda.gov and www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp for information on Office of Domestic Preparedness grants. Questions about NIMS may be sent to NIMS-Integration-Center@dhs.gov, or call (202) 646-3850.



September is National Preparedness Month

This September, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the American Red Cross announced that they will co-sponsor National Preparedness Month 2005 in September. According to their press release, National Preparedness Month will be "a nationwide effort held . . . to encourage Americans to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools. The goal of National Preparedness Month is to increase public awareness about the importance of preparing for emergencies and to encourage individuals to take action." Over 125 organizations have joined the National Preparedness Month Coalition, and numerous events and activities related to emergency preparedness will be held across the country in September.

National Preparedness Month offers Medical Reserve Corps units with a unique opportunity to conduct public education, outreach and recruiting activities in their communities. Medical Reserve Corps units may want to consider conducting or participating in emergency preparedness fairs, workshops, seminars, training programs, exercises and related activities in September. For ideas and examples of National Preparedness Month activities, visit www.ready.gov. However, we would ask that individual Medical Reserve Corps units **not** register as National Preparedness Month Coalition members, since the USA Freedom Corps is already a member organization. A press release is available at <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?content=4538>.

You may also wish to visit the national Medical Reserve Corps website and message board for information and ideas on activities and events your Medical Reserve Corps unit can conduct as part of National Preparedness Month.

Upcoming Events and Training

Yale New Haven International Congress on Disaster Medicine and Emergency Management. September 12-13, 2005 in New Haven, CT. Sponsored by the Yale-New Haven Center for Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response. For more information, visit: <http://www.yalenewhavenhealth.org/emergency/commu/natlconf.html>.

Eighth Annual Conference on Innovations in Disaster Mental Health. September 22-24, 2005 in Rapid City, SD. Sponsored by the Disaster Mental Health Institute at the University of South Dakota. For more information on the conference, visit: <http://www.usd.edu/dmhi/conference.cfm>.

2005 Homeland Security Summit: Partnering for Preparedness. October 12-14, 2005 in Arlington, VA. Sponsored by the Performance Institute. For more information, visit <http://homelandsecurityweb.org/hss/>.

National Disaster Mental Health Conference. October 20-22, 2005 in Estes Park, CO. Organized by the Rocky Mountain Region Disaster Mental Health Institute. For more information, call (307) 399-4818, e-mail rockymountain@mail2emergency.com or visit <http://www.rmrinstitute.org/Estes-Conference.html>.

IAEM 2005 Annual Conference and EMEX. November 12-16, 2005 in Phoenix, AZ. Sponsored by the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). For more information, visit the conference website at <http://www.iaem.com/events/annual/intro.htm>.

Reno County Medical Reserve Corps to Participate in Disaster Preparedness Seminar

In recognition of National Preparedness Month, the Volunteer Center at Hutchinson Community College, in cooperation with the Reno County Health Department and the Reno County Office of Emergency Management, is hosting a free disaster preparedness seminar on September 26, 2005 at Trinity United Methodist Church, 1602 N. Main Street, Hutchinson, KS. Topics will include:

- How you can prepare yourself, your home and your family for disasters
- How county government prepares for disasters
- How the health department prepares for public health emergencies
- The American Red Cross role in disaster preparedness and response
- The role of volunteers in disaster

The event will also include a question and answer session, and informational tables will provide additional information on agencies and programs involved in disaster preparedness. This seminar is free of charge. To reserve a seat, please call The Volunteer Center at (620) 665-4960.